Ascribing a Place to Allāh

Imām Ibn Hazm

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One is required to take Allāh's word, exalted is He, literally as long as there is no text, or consensus, or empirical necessity, which stops us from doing that. We know that everything that is in a place occupies that space and fills it and assumes its shape. One of the two things has to be. We know that whatever is in a place has to be limited by the limits of that place, as it has to be limited by a finite limit in the six or five directions in its space, and these are the attributes of bodies. [1]

The Ummah is agreed that no one should say 'O, He who has ascended, have mercy on me!' just as no one should name his son 'Slave of the One Who Ascended.' [2]

Truly, the meaning of His saying, exalted is He, 'He made istiwā on the Throne' is that He acted in some way on the Throne; namely, He ended His creation with it, for there is nothing after the Throne which is the end of creation; there is nothing after it, neither space, nor void. Anybody who denies that the creation has a finite limit in distance and time and space joins the materialists and leaves Islam. [3]

Nothing can be in space except what is a body or an accident [what occurs in a substance like heat, color and so on] in a body; there is no other possibility, for neither reason nor imagination can conceive of another possibility at all. Since it is concluded that Allāh is neither a body nor an accident, it is concluded that He cannot occupy space absolutely. And Allāh is our help. [4]

[As cited by **Imām Zāhid al-Kawtharī** in his editing of *al-asmā wal sifāt* by al-Bayhaqī, p.416 n.1]

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[1] al-Bayhaqī, *al-asmā wal-sifāt* [Kawtharī edition], p. 516 footnote 1 as cited by al-Kawtharī

[2] Ibid

[3] Ibid

[4] Ibid. This quote was preceded by al-Kawtharī saying, *"Then he refuted those who insist that Allāh ﷻ occupies space and he ended his discourse."* After citing Ibn Hazm, al-Kawtharī said, *"So let those claim to follow the salaf in our times likening Allāh ﷻ to His creatures consider carefully this proclamation of Ibn Hazm."*

The word of the Transcendent,

"Say [to the unbelievers, O Muhammad]: 'To Whom belongs the heavens and the earth?' Tell them: 'It belongs to Allāh,'" [5]

teaches us that space and all that is in it belongs to Allāh. His words,

"There is no one in the heavens and the earth except he will come to the Merciful [on the Day of Judgment] as a slave, [or worshipper, that is acknowledging his slavehood to Allāh]" [6]

provides that whatever dwells in the heavens and the earth are slaves of Allāh.
The words of the Transcendent,

"And His are whatever lives in the night and the day," [7]

indicates that time and all that is in it are the possessions of Allāh, exalted is He. The foregoing Qur`ānic texts show that He, Who is above all imperfection and inadequacy, transcends time and space, as was pointed out by Abū Muslim al-Isbahānī, and al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, and others; otherwise, He would have to be the possessor and the possessed, the worshipper and the worshipped. He, the Transcendent says:

"He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He subdued (istawā) the Throne. He knows what enters the earth and what come out of it, and what comes down from the sky and what goes up to it. He is with you wherever you are, and Allah sees what you do." [8]

The mention here in a single verse of both *istiwā*, and *ma`iyya* (togetherness), the reference is to the words *He is with you*, conclusively indicates that *istiwā* does not have the meaning of *al-istiqrār al-makānī* (place ascension); otherwise, it would preclude the togetherness [mentioned in the same verse.] Just as we have to interpret togetherness [to avoid an impermissible material implication], we have to interpret *istiwā* [to avoid a material implication]. [9]

[As cited from *al-fasl baynal firāq* by **Ibn Hazm**]

[5] Qur'ān, Sūrat al-An`ām 6:12
[6] Qur'ān, Sūrat Maryam 19:93
[7] Qur'ān, Sūrat al-An`ām 6:13
[8] Qur'ān, Sūrat al-Hadīd 57:4
[9] Ibn Hazm, *al-fasl bayn al-firāq*